

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 005217

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EU, EUR/WE, SA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2013

TAGS: MOPS MASS PREL AF IT AFGHANISTAN

SUBJECT: ITALY: STILL CONSIDERING GHAZNI PRT

REF: A. ROME 5121

B. ROME 5003

C. ROME 4933

D. STATE 317086

CLASSIFIED BY: A/POL MINCOUNS JOHN BASS, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: DESPITE THE TERRORIST BOMBING OF ITALIAN CARABINIERI HEADQUARTERS IN IRAQ, WE BELIEVE ITALY CONTINUES TO GIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO PROVIDING A PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM (PRT) IN GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN, ALTHOUGH A FINAL DECISION HAS NOT BEEN REACHED. AN MOD-LED TEAM IS IN AFGHANISTAN STUDYING THE POSSIBILITY. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) THE NOVEMBER 12 TERRORIST BOMBING IN NASIRIYA, IRAQ, WHICH KILLED 19 ITALIANS, MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, WORKING ON RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION IN THAT AREA (REF A), MAY HAVE SLOWED, BUT APPEARS NOT TO HAVE STOPPED, ITALIAN CONSIDERATION OF PROVIDING A PRT IN GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN. A UK PRT BRIEFING TEAM FOUND A RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE AT ITS NOVEMBER 7 MEETINGS WITH ITALIAN OFFICIALS, ACCORDING TO OUR UK EMBASSY COLLEAGUES. AT THAT TIME, PRIOR TO THE NASIRIYA ATTACK, THE MFA WAS MORE INTRIGUED BY THE SMALLER UK PRT MODEL, FOR WHICH IT BELIEVED IT COULD MORE EASILY SECURE PARLIAMENTARY BACKING. THE MOD, HOWEVER, SEEMED EVEN THEN TO BE LEANING TOWARD THE GERMAN APPROACH. AFTER NASIRIYA, UK POLOFF TOLD POL MINCOUNS THAT HE SUSPECTED THE ATTACK MIGHT PUSH THE ITALIANS TOWARD THE MORE ROBUST PRT MODEL. THE GERMAN POLITICAL COUNSELOR OPINED TO POL MINCOUNS THAT AN ITALIAN PRT WOULD STILL BE DISPATCHED, BUT WOULD REQUIRE MORE EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION AND DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT.

13. (C) MFA SPECIAL ENVOY FOR AFGHANISTAN DE MAIO TOLD POLOFF NOVEMBER 13 THAT THE ATTACK "COMPLICATED" CONSIDERATION OF A PRT AND MADE ACCEPTANCE OF GHAZNI AS A SITE THAT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. (DE MAIO HAS PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED CONCERNS ABOUT INSECURITY IN GHAZNI.) HE underscored the urgency of confirming OEF PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE IN THE EVENT IT WOULD BE NEEDED BY A PRT, IN THE WAKE OF ITALY'S TRAGIC LOSSES IN NASIRIYA. WHILE DE MAIO WAS MUCH MORE CAUTIOUS THAN IN PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS, HE DID NOT SUGGEST ITALY WOULD NO LONGER STAND UP A PRT, ONLY THAT THE SCENARIO HAD BEEN COMPLICATED AND THAT GHAZNI AS A SITE WAS MORE OFF-PUTTING TO THE ITALIANS. HIS OFFICE CONFIRMED ON NOVEMBER 18 THAT AN EXPECTED MOD-LED RECONNAISSANCE TEAM WAS ALREADY IN AFGHANISTAN TO STUDY THE IDEA FURTHER. ITALIAN CONSIDERATION OF OUR REQUEST THAT IT LEAD A PRT WILL PROCEED WHEN THE TEAM RETURNS. WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE BOMB ATTACK, DE MAIO ALSO NOTED THAT MONEY TO SUPPORT SENDING A PRT WOULD BE NEEDED; THE MORE ITALY GAVE IN ONE AREA, SUCH AS FOR AFGHAN ELECTIONS, THE LESS IT WOULD HAVE IN ANOTHER -- FOR INSTANCE, TO SUPPORT A PRT.

14. (C) IN THE CONTEXT OF DISCUSSING REF D REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ISAF SUPPORT (FULL REPORT OF OUR CONTACTS ON THAT DEMARCHE SEPTEL), MFA NATO OFFICE DIRECTOR GIOVANNI BRAUZZI ASKED POLMILOFF HOW THE NEW REQUEST FOR HELICOPTERS FOR ISAF FIT INTO THE USG'S OTHER REQUESTS FOR ITALIAN SUPPORT IN AFGHANISTAN. HE SPECULATED THAT PROVIDING THE HELOS COULD POSSIBLY MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO STAND-UP A PRT, AND ASKED IF ONE WERE A GREATER PRIORITY THAN THE OTHER.

15. (C) COMMENT: WHILE THE DEATHS FROM THE ATTACK IN NASIRIYA WERE A BODY BLOW TO ITALY AND CANNOT BUT AFFECT ITS CONSIDERATION OF FURTHER DANGEROUS MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS, WE HAVE SO FAR RECEIVED NO INDICATION THAT IT HAS STYMIED ITALIAN CONSIDERATION TO SUPPORT A PRT IN AFGHANISTAN. THE PROCESS MAY HAVE BEEN SLOWED, AND THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE MAY BE TOUGH, BUT WE DO NOT THINK IT IS DEAD. WE CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE A POSITIVE DECISION. END COMMENT. SEMBLER

NNNN

2003ROME05217 - Classification: CONFIDENTIAL